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Poems

By

JOHN HUTCHESON MILLAR.

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1867
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POEMS.

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BY

JOHN HUTCHESON MILLAR.

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1867.

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MINOR POEMS.

ON A DEPARTED MOTHER.

The hoary-headed hermit in his cell,
Seeks not a more quiet hour to read his book,
Than I do in this spot; here to lament,
The loss of my good mother.

A parent's dust lies near me;
'Neath my feet the soft green sward
Grows over her who bore me,
But whose soul went heaven-ward;
And I cannot choose but weep,
Though I've often wept before,
And shed a tear again for her
Who has gone for evermore:

Ah! well do I remember
Those young days when we would roam,
Through the bright green haunts of nature,
Far, far away from home;
But one day soon came after
When in sable mournings dress'd,
I followed my dear mother
To her final place of rest;
And turned away in sorrow
From a strange unearthly sound
Of stones upon the coffin lid,
Down in the hollow ground:
I knew no more I'd gather her
The broom, the scented thorn,
The little sweet forget-me-not,
Or daisy newly born;
No more I'd sit upon her knee
And listen to her praise,
As to my thought she pictured out
A dream of happy days;
And when the slumbering night would come,
I missed the good old song,
Which spoke the joys of heaven,—
Of a bright and happy throng:

No more the morn breaks on my sleep,
To greet a mother's smile;
Or listen to her soul's request,
To keep my heart from guile:
I've never seen the sun, methinks,
She died when last it set,
And I've been watching by her grave
With eyes which still are wet.

Those little cares of childhood, now,
For aye, are passed away;
And youth has followed with its vain
Delusive pleasures gay;
Yet sometimes I have wished her back,
To speak to her again,
And tell her all the burning thoughts
Which I have felt since then;
But could not think to bring the tears
To eyes which oft have wept,
At midnight's hour of slumber,
When she thought that all had slept:
No, rather let my thoughts ascend,
To where her soul hath fled,

When wandering thus alone, throughout
The mansions of the dead;
And may she hear my prayer whene'er
I gaze upon her sod,
That we may meet in heaven,—
In the paradise of God.

1858.

SABBATH MORN.

How sweet and calm a Sabbath morn appears,
Dressed in its robes of tranquil, joyous rest;
Mingling with holy joy, repentant tears;
Soothing the sorrows of each wearied breast.

If thou wouldst taste its pleasures, wend thy way,
And view the smiling morn as from the hills
The sun comes pouring forth in golden ray,
And with refreshing dew the verdure fills:

And like the flowers that rear their little heads,
Opening their petals to its kindling beams;
Like them inhale each beauty nature sheds,
And taste creation in eternal dreams.

Then, wouldst thou have a temple? let it be
Beneath the waving trees; there lift thy voice
And praise the Infinite; with bended knee
Pour forth thy soul in thanks, and there rejoice.

1859.

GLENCOE.

Deeds that are past can never be recalled,
Except within the mystic book of time;
Where memory stands, and, never failing, points
Each bloody page of unavengéd crime:

But oh that memory could forget Glencoe,
When all its offspring perished in a night;
Who sought their couch in peaceful rest to sleep,
And never woke to hail the morning's light.—

Glencoe, whose mountains tower through cloud aloft,
Down whose dark sides the waters wildly roar;
Where her fond children choose to tend their flocks,
Than wield in bloody strife the broad claymore:

Though, ne'er in vain they drew it from its sheath,
When neighbouring chiefs against them had allied;
Alas! too well they felt Macdonald's power;
For this they fell, and with their glory died.

'Twas winter; and the stormy clouds shut out
The face of heaven, and into the west
The sun had long since sunk; the snow lay deep;
The very eagle shuddered in its nest:

No signal marked the midnight hour's approach;
The wind itself but blustering low and deep,
Moaned through the leafless trees and past the tower,
Whose inmates lay enwrapt in silent sleep.

'Twas now the fatal moment; and the night
Stirred in the coming slaughter, with a sound
Which woke the startled sleeper from his couch,
Too soon, alas! to change it for the ground:

Ah! then were heard the cries of helpless child;—
Of mothers' scream, and wild revengeful yell
From each rude clansman, taken unawares;
And all but half expressed, so soon they fell.

The morning came, and the red sun embraced
A scene that had been changed since last it set;—
Changed from a noble glen where life had dwelt,
To a dull grave where "fire and sword" had met.

The ancient tower was gone, razed to the ground;
And desolation haunted every spot:
The snow which undisturbed lay yester-night,
Was marked with embers from each burned down cot.

But now, no trace of life nor death is seen,
A horrid silence beats upon the ear;
Which like a spirit of the mighty past,
Still haunts the lonely traveller with fear.

No more their native slogan shall awake
The echoes of that wild but peaceful glen;
Resounding up its rocky mountain side,
To be re-echoed by its caves again.

1859.

GONE.

With fevered tears she gazed in sad devotion,
Far o'er the billows of the dark blue ocean:

The whistling sound that came upon the gale,
Struck on her ear with long and tragic wail;

And when the sea bird wild tossed o'er the deep,
She'd listen to its cry, and then would weep:

Her future hopes had long been over-cast;
She heaved one sigh, and there she breathed her last;

And drooped beneath the grief of many years;
While o'er her pallid corse, the waves shed tears.

January, 1860.

A MUSE.

O come, sweet muse, and wander!
By some fairies' haunted stream,
And follow its meander,
In a wild enchanted dream;
Inspire me with some magic theme!
Let maze and fear unite;
Thou last faint beam of day begone,
Nor chase the forms of night:

And now, the moon her lunar bow
Throws o'er the silvery fall;
See where the fairies come enow,
They join them one in all:
Through airy paths unseen, they flit,
And twine themselves so fair;
Like gossamer in summer's eve,
High floating in the air:

Then comes as if on zephyr's wing,
A strange but pleasing sound;
The woods with tempting echo ring,
All mystic seems around:

The satyr tunes his sylvan pipe,
And elfin harps are strung;
While the harsh tu-whoo! of the owl
Is heard the trees among:

Then dancing sprites with noisy hum,
Each perched astride a bat;
With uncouth laughter soon they come,
Squeaking their gibberish chat:
Some to the making of mushrooms join,
And others quick resort
Beneath each shadow haunted grove,
To join in antic sport:

There one less eager than the rest,
Has to the river strayed;
And tries with borrowed art it's best,
Till a sweet reed pipe is made;
With exulting twitter it laughs
At each note o'er which it ran;
Sitting in mimic-like form
To its great predecessor Pan.

* * * * *

Say, where have gone those pleasing sounds?
Each vision of delight,
That ever with the night abounds
But vanish from the sight?
Methinks it is the rising sun,
Scaring my dreams away;
Then hence each foolish thought, begone!
My false utopian lay.

August, 1860.

FANCY'S FAVOURITE.

Dancing in the early sunshine;
Laughing till the echoes ring;
Singing with the birds, yet listening
What the little songsters sing.

And when noon with rest inviting,
'Neath the forest's cooling shade
There reclining; watching only,
Shadows which the flowers have made,—

Shadows always growing longer
As the day gives place to night;
Till with music I would woo her,—
Fancy's favourite fair and bright.

1861.

THE LESSON.

The moon her silver rays did cast
Athwart the old church as I pass'd,
And wakened with a flood of light
Those shadows from the realms of night,
Whose silent language seems to tell
Of heaven, and of dismal hell:

Fear fled me, while with motive led,
I sought among the humble dead,
A lesson which perchance would guide
My footsteps through the world wide:—
A lesson from the youthful age,
A moral from the learnéd sage.

One warned me thus; "let time not glide,
"But stem it boldly through the tide;
"Oh sit not down till it is past,
"Else you will join your grave at last,
"Nor leave one monument behind;
"Thy name unknowing as the wind:"

"Hold"! said a calm commanding voice,
"Before you cross make well your choice;
"For often in the stream of life
"Youth follows down to join the strife,
"And soon o'er precipice is toss'd;
"Till in death's ocean all is lost."

Two simple lessons these to read,
Yet oh how mighty in their deed;
For they, when followed in the right,
Shed o'er your path a stream of light;
With calm reflection then I went,
To act them my whole soul was bent.

August, 1861.

A DEATH WATCH.

I.

Fair Hesperus reigns in the twilight grey;
And the watchman taketh his weary way
Around the lone castle, and past the tower,
His brain full of thoughts of that silent hour
When the twilight fades in night:

II.

Then Diana shines in effulgence bright,
And tinges the turrets with her pale light;
While amid the stillness, is heard the breath
Of the weary watchman, dreaming of death,
At the solemn hour, midnight:

III.

The Pleiades wander far in the sky,
And ghost-like shadows are flickering by;
Till scared by the cock's shrill clarion crow,
The watchman knows well 'tis the hour to go,
And he looks athwart the night:

IV.

But doubtful, the darkness lurks in the west;
And morning is waiting in saffron dress'd;
Till angels who open the gates of day
Have frightened the train of death's night away;
Then the watchman welcomes the light!

Sept. 29th, 1861.

REPENTANCE.

[The Zenaedian dove of America is well known for the peculiar sweetness and melody of its notes. Audubon the ornothologist relates the story of a Pirate, who, after hearing one of them cooing, was induced to leave his vessel and return home to his forgotten family.]

Just as the setting sun withdrew its beams
From off the golden sands of ocean's wave;
On Florida's mild coast a pirate stood,
And listened to the melancholy coo
Of a Zenaedian dove; its plaintive notes,

Awoke within his ravished breast the thoughts
Of former innocence, which made him feel
The wretchedness of guilt, and then a tear
Came trickling down his weather-beaten face;
The first he shed since at his mother's grave;
At which sad thought he could restrain them not
From flowing faster, and he yearned for home,
And all its loved ones smiling round the hearth;
So deeply was he moved, that from that hour
He shrunk in horror from his former self;
Forsook his wild companions, and returned
To his lone family who deplored his loss;
Where, after he had lived for many years
Within their smiles; he wandered back in search
Of that dear spot; and listening to the dove
Cooing melodious to the tranquil scene,
Blessed the Creator of that little bird
Which turned the pirate to an honest man.

Feb. 23d, 1862.

THE STORM.

The thunder rent the heavens,—while the clouds
Sent forth their fiery elements,—and shook
The troubled city as it lay beneath,
Wrapt in black gloom and dark discomfiture.
In thought I gazed far up the dark blue vault,
When lo! I saw a bird with out-stretched wings
Floating serenely through the ether world:
So noble was the sight, my raptured soul
Seemed to forsake its dwelling, and take flight,
Till I was equal with the wondrous bird;
And there in contemplation of the storm
Which vented forth its wrath upon this globe,
Thought of my brother whom I left behind,
Clearing his pathway through the ills of life
Alone and unobserved: I dropped a tear,
Then plunged to help him in the noble strife.

April 13th, 1862.

FAREWELL.

"Farewell!" I heard a fond youth say; as from his
lover's cheek
He kissed away the falling tears, which caused them
but to speak
The more; for he had made a vow to tread a foreign
shore;
There toil, and fill his empty purse with shining gold,
before
That lovely maiden he would press unto his breast a
bride;—
And oh! 'twas misery to see the tears they could not
hide:—
To part! alas! they little dreamt the pain their hearts
would tell,
Ere they could wring from out their souls that little
word, farewell.

"Farewell!" a warrior said, and bowed his head to
shed a tear;
Then sped across the battle-field, and left far in the
rear

Parents and brothers, sisters kind, the dearest ties on earth;—
He left them all at home, within the land which gave him birth:
'Twas for his country's rights he fought;—the noblest and the best;—
For this he smiled, for this his heart beat high as on he press'd:
He was the first amidst the fight, among the first who fell;
And, as he raised to heaven his eyes, bade this dark world farewell.

"Farewell!" a mother said, and kissed her little babe's blue eyes,
That oft had shone with sunny smiles, but now with piteous cries
Had wept them dim: the mother feels her little infant's pain,
And helpless, strains it to her breast, again, and o'er again.

It was, of all the rest, the gem; it was her dearest Pet,
For all her brightest hopes had been upon the youngest set:
She watched it till she saw death come to carry it away;
Then clutched it in her arms, and press'd a form of lifeless clay.

"Farewell!" an old man said,—whose locks were white as drifted snow;
With furrow'd brow, and trembling limbs which tottered to and fro:—
It falter'd on his lips, as he unto his bosom press'd
His children's little ones, before they had retired to rest;
For death had told him to prepare, and journey on his way
To join that train of travellers, who leave behind this day,
And by to-morrow's light are gone within that distant land,
Where all to us is as a blank, and they a silent band.

June 18th, 1862.

THE TREES.

I've heard a pleasing story of a man;
Who, when he took to wife a lovely maid,
And the first-born appeared, a beauteous boy;
Taking the babe within his arms he said—
"For thee I'll plant a tree, and with a care
"Will watch and rear it till it grows erect;
"And if thou fall beneath the hand of death,
"Then will I cut it down above the root,
"That it may stand a memory of the past;
"And bring this serious thought into my mind,
"That life is vanity, and death is real."
And thus he did; for when a child was born
He planted each a tree, until the sixth
Had reared its stately form: I've seen them oft;
Four lift their branches still; the other two
The father had cut down, to mark the death
Of his lov'd offspring; till at last himself
Was called from off this earth: thus stand they now,
Sighing upon the wind their funeral dirge;
And never do I pass without the thought,
That "life is vanity, and death is real."

July 27th, 1862.

TRUE PLEASURE.

Loud roars the wind across the stormy deep;
The labouring barque toils on its devious course;
The wild sea mew screams forth her dismal note;
And all the land in dark and sullen mood,
Seems in displeasure at the lowering clouds
Which toss about, and with a grim delight
Laugh at the storm. 'Twas but an hour ago,
Since all the air was heavy with the sweets
Of summer luxury; the flowers sent forth
Their richest fragrance upon zephyr's wing;
The butterfly within the sunbeam danced,
While bees returning with their honied store,
Proclaimed their presence with the well-known strain:
Yet with a mind unchanged by every gloom,
I watched the various aspect and exclaimed;—
O 'tis a pleasure thus to feel the breeze
Upon one's cheek, to smell the scented air
From off the sea, and mark the rolling waves
Dashing their foamy crests against the rocks,
As if in very triumph! midst the sport,
The sea bird sweeps the billows with its wing,

And cries aloud for joy! the very hills
Re-echo back the sound, until your heart,
Unable to keep silence, shouts aloud!
In such a scene I would not change my lot,
For all the vain insipid toys of wealth:
And whence this joy? 'tis but to those whose hearts
Belong to Nature, and whose thoughts are God's;—
Their's is the gift, none others can possess
The fair green fields, or mark with a delight
Each tender flower; this pleasure is debarr'd
From the rich man who lolls in luxury.

August, 1862.

TO THE WILD CONVOLVULUS.

When first I saw thy pearly beauty shine
In spotless purity, among the leaves
Of a quiet, shady, and sequestered spot,
Far in the corner of an old church-yard;—
I felt enraptured at the thought, that thou
Couldst grow such elegance, and claimed thee mine;
And called thee still since then, my favourite flower.

Hail! silent flower; for thou art seldom seen,
Except in some lone shade: thou lovest not,
To own thy beauty on the rough highway;
Seeking that loneliness in some quiet walk,
For which I love thee. Stranger, pluck it not!
'Twill wither soon when torn from off its stem;
But let it grow, that it may cheer the sight,
Peeping from forth its dwelling of green leaves.

August 17th, 1862.

TO HOPE.

Lead on, fair Hope! thou art my only love,
Although thy kisses sweet are far between:
Thou dost resemble that chaste huntress, fair
Diana, whose swift feet doth ever lead
Far from the rude embrace; and yet, methinks
'Tis doubtless better still, for in mine arms
Thy charms, though unsurpassed, would cease to
please;
Thy very name would take its flight to heaven;

And like fond Paris at the siege of Troy,
Unmindful of the war, in Helen's arms,—
So would I yield my valour unto thee.
But hence such idle thoughts, fair Hope, lead on!
Unclasp thy magic zone, and let the breeze,—
The golden future's warm impassion'd breath,
Discover to mine eyes thine angel form:
Loosen thy golden locks, and let them dance
Upon thy shoulders purer than the snow;
Nor hide thy breasts, but say that thou wilt lead
My steps at last within thy secret bower,
And I will follow, yea, until I grasp
Thy sacred garments on the grave's dark brink!

August 25th, 1862.

THE DELIGHTS OF NATURE.

'Tis sweet to smell the scented air
Upon a lovely morn in spring;
When nature's face is fresh and fair,
And birds are on the wing:

To hear the merry plough-boy's song,
And blackbird's note so sweet and clear;
While from the fold the lambkin's bleat
Falls plaintive on the ear.

'Tis pleasant on a summer day,
To sit upon the mountain side,
And mark the sunbeams as they play
Far out upon the tide:
To hear the falling of the waves,
Faint murmuring while they flow;
As if lamenting o'er the dead
That lie unknown below.

'Tis tranquil when the moon proclaims
An autumn eve, and nature smiles;
To meet fair maids and lusty swains
Returning from their toils:
To hear along the silent vale
The tinkling of the village bells:
Such time the lover tells his tale,—
The poet's bosom swells.

But O! 'tis glorious when the blast
Of winter foams across the deep;
To seek some cave where one can cast
Their burthen off and weep!
To hear its walls re-echo back
The ocean's everlasting moan,
And feel a pleasure unto which
The world is still unknown!

1862.

FLORA'S WELCOME.

Where the summer sun was sparkling,
O'er the meadows green and golden;
There I met a lovely maiden,
And her arms with flowers were laden,
And amid her golden hair
Pearly dew drops glistened fair;
While beneath her eyes so bright
Nature revelled in delight:

And she smiling bade me follow,
As she tripped across the meadow
With her light and fairy feet,
To a quiet and cool retreat,
Where the willows all the day
Shade a bed of flowers gay;
There I laid me down to rest
With my head upon her breast:

And with language soft as music,
That entranced me with delight;
Soon she claimed my heart victorious,
While all nature sang the chorus;
"Thou art welcome, rich and poor,
"Here thy pleasures still are sure;
"And when sick with bitter sorrow,
"Come! and find respite with Flora."

October 1st, 1862.

THE MAID I'LL LOVE.

I'll love the maiden true,
Whose heart can ne'er be bought,
But wears with innocence
The graces nature taught:
Who'd yield to beauty's sway
Beneath an honest eye?
'Tis but a thing of earth,
While truth comes from the sky.

I hate the fickle mind
That wears, a tempting mask
To lead the foolish swain;
Of them I do but ask
To lay aside deceit,
Such artful smiles to please;
Sure nature to thy sex
Made nobler gifts than these:

Whose heart could thus be caught,
Has but an empty mind;
And thou, when 'tis too late,
For all thy toil would find
Love is no foolish thing,
Pleased with the wiles of art,
But whose sole pleasure is
A true and loving heart.

Her only can I love
  Who wears but native charms;
No other maid I'll press
  With passion in mine arms;
Soon as my heart shall find
  A gem so rare as this,
To her I'll tell my love,
  And pledge it with a kiss!

October 12th, 1862.

THE POET.

See! in the east the sun with golden rays
  Again proclaim another day's bright dawn,
While all the birds their morning anthems raise,
  And wake the echoes of the dewy lawn.

And who is this that slowly wends his way
  Along the shaded wood, and past the stile?
A contrast strange to all around so gay,—
  Upon his face a melancholy smile:

It is the Poet, who, while yet the morn
Withheld its light, and half the world slept;
Left his lone garret, where, with hope forlorn,
Throughout the silent night he vigil kept.

'Twas he who saw the sun in glory set,
And hail'd fair Hesperus, the queen of love;
'Twas he who walked in fancy till he met
The pale moon wand'ring in the vault above:

He heard the city's midnight revel cease;
He watched the lights extinguished one by one;
And then sat down to pen his thoughts in peace—
The inspirations of some song begun:

He heard, within his quiet and lonely cell,
Resounding, weird-like, through the silent street,
The murmur of the deep Cathedral bell,
And measured footstep of the patrol's beat.

And so rejoicing in his own calm mind,
He tasted pleasures but for him alone;
He drew a lamentation from the wind,
And formed sweet music from the stars which shone:

He sang a requiem to the silent dead;
He heaved a sigh for loved ones far away;
For loss of friendship tears of sorrow shed,
Or o'er some fond one wrote a mournful lay.

He scorns the world's never-ending strife,
And only feels a pleasure when he strays
Afar from vain and artificial life,
To live secluded from its empty gaze.

And yet 'tis strange to think, that in the crowd,
None knows the Poet;—there he walks exempt,
With his big thoughts wrapt up as in a shroud;—
Thoughts which could treat the world with contempt!

October 19th, 1862.

THE CITY OF DEATH.

Away far down the stream of time,
I sailed my feeble bark
Into the ocean, death's cold brine,
Where all is deep and dark.

Through stormy billows, doubt and fear,
I sought a haven's rest,
But knew not whither I might steer
For thoughts that burned my breast:—

Longing to know what death would reap,
And what our final doom,
When lo! arose from out the deep
A city wrapt in gloom:

And nearing to its awful shore,
In that still hour of night
Preceding a dreamless sleep, before
The soul hath ta'en its flight;

I climbed the rocks with beating breath,
And stretching far away
I saw, amidst those halls of death,
Pale forms in dark array;

With torches glimmering in each hand
And pointing to the ground,
Which cast upon that silent band
A sickly glare around:

And all along each silent street
An endless crowd passed on;—
A crowd where foes as brothers meet,
With all their hatred gone;

But ere life's blood had ceased to flow,
And ere my spirit fled,
I heard with undescribéd woe
A voice from out the dead:—

"Hail! stranger to this universal world;
"Nature's unknown to thee till thou hast come
"To the dark earth, where from all mortal ken,
"The secrets of creation lie immured."

Thus spoke a form, whose aspect seemed to wear
The mystic look of ages long since gone;
Whom, questioning thus, I asked, Did'st thou belong
To that great nation Rome, which ruled the world?
Or if from Greece, where thou perhaps beheld'st
Olympic games by mighty Pelops crowned?
Methinks thy sphinx-like countenance denotes
Thou art a remnant of forgotten time;—
A brooding spirit from Egyptian night.
Or didst thou live in that primeval age
Where history stops as though it were a blank?
Say, canst thou tell me aught of that old land,
Where far amid the prairie's level plains
Are found the works of nations now unknown?
Or hast thou ever dreamt of such a time
When man was not, and round the silent globe
The Mammoth roamed; when from the stormy deep
Leviathan his scaly armour reared?
If once this world was enwrapt in flames,
Hurling the memory of another race
Far down oblivion's dark unfathomed caves:—
A race, to whom fame's high and sacred paths
Were not unknown; to whom, as unto us,

Their life was vanity, and nothing new
Had then, as now, come underneath the sun:
Can'st thou not whisper whither they have fled;
And with a single nod dispel the doubt,—
Of sinking into horrid nothingness?
I paused and listened; but the mystic form
Faded before mine eyes, and a dark pall
Fell down and covered all; while from behind
I heard the voices of the mighty dead,
With mocking laughter, crying, "Come and See."

1862.

THE OLD HOME.

I sigh when I think of the days that are fled,
When care and misfortune alike were unknown;
For my guardian angel now lies with the dead,
And mournful I wander the world alone.

I never can love; for as oft as I try
This life with its selfishness empty and vain,
As oft do I feel disappointment, and sigh
For the home of my guardian mother again:

Yet sometimes I feel, if perchance I should stray
Through scenes where her footsteps delighted to roam;
In memory's dream to be carried away,
And dwell for a time in my dear mother's home.

December, 1862.

THE INDIAN CHIEF.

Bright shone the sun in the west,
Through forests of pine tree and maple;
Slanting its rays o'er the woods,
The river, and sides of the mountains;
When from the forest there sprung
An Indian red as the sunset:
He was a warrior chief,
His weapons of war hung around him;
Toys which were dear to him now,
For these, they were all that was left him;
All that was left of the time
He went to the fight with his comrades:—
Comrades! ah where were they now;
They had gone like mist from the mountains:
This why the reason he wept,
And smote on his breast and looked upwards:
"Where! O great Spirit," he cried,
"Doth wander my wife and my children;
Shall I behold them no more,
And am I forsaken for ever:
Where are the forests I loved,

My country, my home, and my people
Shall they not live to repeat
The deeds that were done by their fathers,
Or to recall from the dead
The Spirits of heroes departed:
Shall the red child of the west
Live only in song and in story,
Or but to tell his own shame,—
A slave to his foes, to the white man:
If this be all that remains,
Oh! then let me die in my freedom;
This be my fate!" he exclaimed,
And plunged in the depth of the river,
Leaving no ripple behind,
No track but the mark of his footstep;—
Last of his footsteps on earth,—
The last of the Indian Warrior.

1868.

POLAND.

O for a spark of heavenly fire!
To wake the patriotic lyre
If Poland it could save;
If it would rouse in every breast
A feeling for the slave oppress'd;
And aid the falling brave.

Fain would I see each freeman rise
From every land beneath the skies
And with their swords on high,
Swear! so to break the monarch's chain
That freedom there at last would reign,
Or in her cause to die.

Shew me the man could be a slave,
Or would not draw the sword to save
A brother from disgrace;
If such there is, O may his name
Be branded as a living shame
For ever on his race.

See! where poor Poland in the field,
Though barely armed, disdains to yield,
And scorns the tyrant's laws;
While through the thickest carnage fly
The souls of those who never die,
And beckon in their cause:

Can Scotland e'en forget their wrong,
While yet she reads from Campbell's song
How Kosciusko fell?
No! let us rather aid the brave,
That hope may o'er their banners wave,
And all shall yet be well.

Could Poet's wish obey command,
Then, every tyrant in the land
Would hide his face in shame;
And bid his reign of terror cease,
Till sounds alone of joyous peace
Gave glory to his name!

April, 1863.

LINES.

The sun is setting; and its golden beams
Diffuse their splendour o'er the ancient towers
Of Stirling Castle: from its battlements
I gaze enraptured on the plain below;
Where, like a serpent glittering in the sun
The proud Forth rolls its waters to the main;—
Proud of the many scenes that grace its banks.
See! where yon Abbey, standing silently,
Rears its lone tower; where oft the vesper bell
Chimed forth its music such an hour as this,
And called the monks to prayer; reminding one
Of days, when knights were friars, and mighty kings
Would change their palace for a monastery.
That rocky height recalls another time,
When Scotia's champion fought for freedom's cause,
And won the first of his great victories;
Where now with pride the sons of freedom raise
A monument, to mark the illustrious spot;
And there the field of Bannockburn, where Bruce
His banner raised on that auspicious morn,
When from the valour of his chosen few
A mighty army fled discomfited:

There's not a spot the eye can rest itself
But what records some wild romantic tale;
Even yon blue mountains, there, the heather waves
O'er many a chieftain's grave!

July 19th, 1863.

THE WISH.

The joyous spring hath come, but yet I seem to feel
The winter of neglect around my bosom steal;—
Around my bosom steal, nor one bright hopeful ray
To melt its icy bands in tears of joy away.

* * * *

O for a loving heart! O for a soul to cheer!
O for one kindly smile! while I sit weeping here:—
While I sit weeping here, deserted, and alone,
An exile from the world, forgotten, and unknown.

I'm happy when around, the eyes of beauty shine,
But, 'tis a cruel dream, a juggling trick of time;—
A juggling trick of time, for when the scene is past,
I look in vain to find a constant heart at last.

O! surely there is one among the silent few,
Whose heart shall yet be mine, whose love will prove
me true;—
Whose love will prove me true, and faithful as sincere,
No wish shall then be mine to mar the joyous year!

August 6th, 1863.

THE IDEAL.

I know a maid with locks of golden hair,
That cluster round a face of dimpled smiles;
With large blue eyes, deep as the azure sky
Of summer twilight when it fades in night:—
Like bright-eyed Venus, when she deigns to smile
As great Hyperion wakens up the morn;
Or when that lingering in the balmy west
She sheds a tear when he hath disappeared.—
She knows me not; and yet I've seen her oft
Wakening the slumbers of the early morn;
Or gliding all alone through silent night,
Sighing to nature for a kindred heart.

1863.

THE WARNING.

Far in the glade around a village church,
Stands a rude stone with ivy growing o'er;
Beneath its shade lies one, who's heart, now dead,
Shall beat in unison with mine no more:

The accents of her heavenly voice are gone;
Her golden curls lie rotting in the mould;
Her eyes like stars have set; her clay cold lips
Closed o'er her parting words but half untold:

* * * *

"Beware of love!" she said, and o'er her face
There seemed to spread a sympathetic smile,
Beseeching like, as though some secret wish
Died in her heart;—a heart so free from guile.

August 31st, 1863.

FAME.

The ancient sibyls read the stars of heaven,
And all the world worshipped them as gods;
They feasted them with music and the dance;
The poets sang their praise; Melpomene
With measured step declared them on the stage;
The orator with tongue of eloquence,
Drew down their blessing on the sons of earth;
And while the sculptor from the marble formed
Their shape divine, the painter with his brush
Recalled their glorious deeds to life again.
Awake ye slumberers! see where Phœbus waits
Beside the eastern gate, to lead you forth
Upon the rugged path of life, that leads
Up to the temple of immortal Fame!

SHAKESPERE.

Immortal bard of Avon! thou hast left
The tracings of thy fingers so defined
Within the deep mysterious book of time,
That like a favourite volume it remains
For ever open at the well read page.
Greatest of poets! thou, whose early muse
Called down the maids of heaven, the immortal nine;
When, as they stood before thy ravished sight,
Thou saw and loved, then made them each thy bride:
And what a mighty progeny was thine!
Which to this moment hold thine honoured name,
And reign supreme o'er all the letter'd world;
While yet the crowd with one great voice exclaim,
"We ne'er have seen the like!"

CHATTERTON.

Lingers thy spirit o'er thy workhouse grave?
Where does it wander? is it still within
The doubtful mazes of the infinite?
Or is it travelling through eternal space,
Seeking a friend or longing for a star
Wherein to rest itself? where is the flame!
The immortal spark that burned within thy breast?
When bursting from its prison, did it join
Some fiery comet mingling with the stars?
Oh! where is it? I've cried, musing the while
Upon the cause of thy untimely death;
For I would give my life if I but thought
To meet thy presence, for I long to tell
That Chatterton's immortal! many tears
Have fell an offering when thy tale was told.

WHITE.

Come, studious White, thy genius shineth forth
More bright than when at first with midnight lamp
Thou sat'st to pen thy thoughts: when night would come,
And all around thee had retired to rest;
Then wouldst thou steal, and hie thyself away
To court the youthful muse's bower unseen:
Nor didst thou court in vain; for when she heard
Thy tender notes, she quickly left her couch
To meet thee in her charms: thy raptured soul
Could love none more than her; she was to thee
Thy life throughout the day, and then at night
Thou revelled'st in her bower. It may be said,
Thou wert belovéd by the gods indeed;
For ere the world to thy pleading voice
Had given ear, they heard thee from above,
And sent a summons in the guise of Death,
Who bade thee hurry hither with thy lyre.

KEATS.

Roll on, fair earth, beneath the darkening shade
Of superstitious fear, and tyranny:
The morning star of truth, with aerial light,
Tells of the coming day that soon will break
Upon the welcome visions of our sight;
Then may the tenants of the leafy grove
Spring from their covert, fearless of the owl,
And chaunt their matin songs with joyous note.
O when shall genius e'er receive the fruits
Which she should have? and not when it is dead,
And the fair form that once gave action to
Its every thought, lies mouldering stiff and cold;—
A piece of clay, unconscious to the praise
That rings from ear to ear, how that his muse
Gives pleasure, and instills into our mind
Sublimity of thought!

MOORE.

Thou guileless poet of the sister isle;
Beloved son of nature and of heaven!
There is a mighty power within thy name,
Can swell the breast to patriotic fire,
Or melt it with the soft delights of love.
I met his spirit in the "Minstrel Boy,"
Wandering across the noisy battle-field;
With sword begirt, and o'er his shoulder slung
The harp of Erin, which he tuned the while
To the rich melody of his native land:
And when he fell upon that well-won field,
A heart had ceased to beat, that ne'er had been
Surpassed in all its ecstasy of love,
Unless 'twas by the heart of Sappho's self!

GOLDSMITH.

The death cry went abroad, "poor Goldy's dead!"
And all his old associates heaved a sigh;
Burke burst in tears, and when great Reynolds heard
The fatal news, he laid aside the brush,
And spent that day in musing on his friend.
And so he went, as others went before,
As honest and as poor as he was born;
For though he lavished priceless gems of thought
Upon the world, yet it repay'd him not;
But held from him those little things of life
Which keep us from the gripe of poverty;
Until at last, it drove him to despair;
And the young son of genius, ere he saw
The great idea of his life begun,
Sunk nerveless in the grave, and then the crowd
Began to praise him, and to cry, "poor man!"

BURNS.

When thou didst leave this undeserving world,
The Doric harp was laid upon thy grave,
And since hath lain untouched; no one has dared
To cast their fingers o'er its sacred strings;
The spirit of thy own creation still
Wakens its chords unquestioned, and alone.

* * * *

And who would say he err'd? O come and see
Thy brother's death-bed! and with quenchéd pride
Behold the form of one who moved the world!
His eyes grew dim with stretching them beyond
This earth's short limit, and he saw death come
To cut him down, while yet within his prime;
With purpose then to all but him unknown,
He stretched his arms aloft, and with a bound
Fell in the arms of death; there to forget
The sickening world of hypocrisy.

END OF MINOR POEMS.

THE MUSE OF MY YOUTH.

How well I remember the days of my boyhood,
When through the green woodlands with pleasure I'd roam;
Adown in the glen, or far up in the wildwood,
Regardless of school and forgetful of home.

'Twas then that I knew each fair spot in its beauty,
The moss-covered hillside where primroses grew;
Or up in the copse where the sweet scented lily
In vain strove to rival the blue bell in hue:

I knew where the fern and the bracken abounded,
And waved their soft foliage so graceful and gay;
Beside where the water's fall gently rebounded,
And loaded each leaf with its spangles of spray.

But now, though these scenes are the same as I left them;
To me they seem withered, and wasted, and bare;
For death has been there with his scythe, and bereft them
Of all the old faces which made them so fair:

Ah! now, I behold with a feeling of sadness,
Where stands on the hillside in ruins so grey,
A cot which re-echoed the voices of gladness;
O where now, I ask, are those voices to-day?

Alas! could those walls but repeat the sad story,
And tell me where all its dear inmates are gone;
If the old man still lives, with locks long and hoary,
And whither the laughing eyed damsels have flown.

I looked but in vain for a kind face to welcome,
For all was so strange; and the birds on each tree
Awakened within me the sad recollection,—
They sang not their sweet native music for me:

And turning in sadness, when up from the valley
A soft voice seemed calling my steps back again,
I eagerly sought for the well-beaten alley
Which led to the green sylvan shade of the glen.

And there on the banks of that deep flowing river,
A lone figure sat 'mong the wild flowers so fair;
"And could'st thou," she murmured, "forget me for ever;
Alas! for the wreath I have bound for thy hair."

Her name it was Memory; could I forget her?
"Ah no!" I exclaimed, and she placed on my brow
An evergreen wreath, which despite every fetter,
Shall flourish till death as it's blossomed till now!

1863.

DIANA.

Phœbus sets with golden splendour,
And Diana bathed in tears
Seeking for her lost Endymion,
From the eastern sky appears.

Quick she spreads her garments over
Hill and dale, and woody grove;
Bringing joy to many a lover
As he flies to meet his love:

But when met, each one is jealous
Of the rays she kindly sends;
And, while striving to escape them,
Seeks the shadow she befriends.

October 4th, 1863.

A SIMILE.

The bud that opens in the morn,
And blooms so fair and gay,
May from its parent stem be torn,
Ere night to fade away:—

Like hopes which with the morning rise,
So plausible and bright;
But fade with sorrow from our eyes,
Ere yet 'tis scarcely night.

October 25th, 1863.

TWILIGHT.

In the twilight, in the twilight,
When the nightingale is singing
From the willows in the valley,
Where its notes come gently stealing
In the twilight.

In the twilight, in the twilight,
When the peasant from his labour,
Plodding homeward, sees the fireside
Cheerful glimmering in the distance,—
In the twilight.

In the twilight, in the twilight,
When, perhaps, two happy lovers
Seated in some sacred arbour,
Breathe in whispers of their true love
In the twilight.

In the twilight, in the twilight,
When the melancholy music
Of dame Nature, swells the bosom
Of the Poet! as he wanders
In the twilight.

November 1st, 1868.

TRUE LOVE.

There eyes have met, and each one seeks a spot
Where they may find an utterance to their love;
For both have seen in each, a prize that's won
Their hearts from one another; and the months
And years which follow, tend but to increase
The ardour of their mutual tenderness.

Their souls are one; and now before their God
They solemnly unite, eternal friends:
To have one home is all their wish, for they
Are dearer to each other than themselves:
They feel but cannot utter what is love,
And so they thus agree to call it heaven.

Years pass away and youth gives place to age,
But changing scenes have proved each other's worth:
Sorrows and tears have mingled with their joy;
And though the passion of their youth is gone,
Their hearts are yet more dear, and then their love—
It lives for ever bless'd with joys eternal.

November 12th, 1863.

WINTER.

Again the winter with his frozen locks
Doth cover o'er the scene his cloak of snow;
And where the landscape looked a dreary waste,
There falls a heavy softness; and the trees,
Withered and bare, and the bleak mountain side,
Now wear a different and a solemn look:
To me it seems, that here again we stand
Upon the threshold of another year,
While old rough winter with compassion comes,
And casts his robe around our many sins,
Asking us kindly, "wilt thou not repent?"

November, 1863.

A REMEMBRANCE.

With arch-like smile she led my willing steps,
To a sweet spot seen only to be loved;
Where ancient ivy wantonly embraced
The antique terrace of a garden walk,
Embowered mid trees, so that the envious moon
But strove in vain to pierce its sacred depths;
Even rude Boreas turned aside his wrath,
And burst in anger o'er the neighbouring woods.
And there we sat; while she with heavenly muse
Hushed up the various chords of nature's voice,
That time trod softly, and its onward flight
Was heard but to the world: yet it passed;
For after many years I've hied away
To where the cascade pours its silvery flood,
And watched the magic glimmer of the moon
Fall softly through the trees, and on the pool
Whose deep still waters seemed another world;
And standing there alone, would think of her
Whose soul was deep and silent as the night
When first I sought her love, while yet her heart
Was warm as summer's day, and her sweet lips
Would oft return the kiss, yet ne'er a word
Betrayed her inmost thoughts; her very eyes
Seemed like the silent pool where envied worlds
Rolled uninhabited.

November, 1863.

ON THE DEATH OF A FRIEND.

What! dead and buried? Him I loved so well;
And whom I used to call my Hercules;
A fair and comely youth: I would have sworn
'Gainst the ability of death's cold dart
To pierce his manly breast; may God forgive,
If in my pride I've scorned the silent grave,
And said, to thee belongs a loathsome train
Of worn-out travellers loaded with disease;
While he I praised and flattered for his strength
Lay numbered with the dead; alas! alas!
Not for the grief I feel, for thou wert one
Who could not leave this earth to be forgot
By those who knew thee; thou couldst not thus withdraw
Thy loving heart unnoticed from the scene.
Alas! but not for them, 'tis for thy sire,
And thy belovéd mother who hath watched—
With pleasure which a mother only feels,—
Thy footsteps from the cradle, which so soon
Should step into the grave; God's will be done,
But, oh! the grief which must be felt by them
'Twere vain indeed for my poor muse to tell;
Even my own sorrow, I can not relate:
I only wish there were none else to weep;
Then might such lines as these signed with a tear,
Repay the debt I owe his memory.

December 21st, 1863.

THE MAN OF SORROWS.

Alone, the Saviour in Gethsemane knelt,
In the dull twilight's silent solitude;
And prayed with passion to his sacred Father,
"Thy will not mine be done." Ye faithless Three
How sleep betrayed ye then, when such great drops
Of blood could fall upon the ground unheard:
Alas! the grief our Saviour must have felt
To find you sleeping still, while yet he prayed
Three times these words, "Father, thy will be done;"
And then to be betrayed, even by the hand
Of Judas his disciple:—yet, more kind
Than those who left him in adversity;—
More kind by far than thou, O Simon Peter!
Denying thy Master in his latest hour:
Alas! our reckless and unheeding thought,
Has no conception of the awful grief
Which pierced his heart, when thus he stood alone,
Deserted by his people, and his God.

March 1st, 1864.

THE LOVERS.

Under the willows,
In the calm twilight;
Tripping it softly,
Speaking in whispers;
Unconscious to all around
Save the sweet nightingale,
Or to the gentle dove
Wooing its mate:

There the fond lovers
Are carelessly wandering,
Following Cupid
The little pathfinder,
By the meanderings
Of some dark river,
Whose embowered mazes
Seem but a dream.

Swiftly they pass away
The golden moments,
Until the stars of night
Fade in the sky;
And morning finds them
But returning home,
Repeating love's old story
O'er again.

March 29th, 1864.

THE INVITATION.

From a letter, written by Joseph Addison, to the young Earl of Warwick.

"Come to the country," said the quaint "Spectator,"
As to a friend he wrote one summer day;—
"Come here and rusticate, you'll find it better
Than all the pleasures of the city gay.

"Accept my invitation to a concert
Which I have found here in a neighbouring wood,
Surpassing far the melody of man's art,
I'm certain it will do your young heart good.

"First, there's a lark which by way of overture
Sings mounting upward till she's lost to sight,
Where, after warbling forth her notes so pure,
Again repeats them in her downward flight.

"Then comes a gush of music from a blackbird,
Till it is echoed by a thrush again;
A little robin redbreast warbles part third,
A bullfinch lengthens the melodious strain.

"I can assure you 'tis a relaxation,
Which even Cicero himself commends;
So come at once, and you will find occasion
To prize dame Nature dearer than your friends."

1864.

A SERENADE.

Arise, my love, while yet the sun
His glory hides behind yon hills;
Ere yet the moon her course hath run,
While yet her light the landscape fills!

My lute has waked the silent bowers,
Where I have wandered all alone;
Then come and share with me the hours,
Before the slumbering night is gone!

And wilt thou listen to my lay,
Which I have tuned alone for thee?
Then rise, my love, before 'tis Day,
And seek its first delights with me!

1864.

A POET'S LOVE.

To thee, O Death, I'd willingly resign!
If it would prove a maiden fond and true;
Whose heart could then as willingly be mine,
As at this moment I'd concede to you.

I seek not wealth, the poverty of love,
Nor dazzling beauty, that is ever vain;
Nor sparkling wit, which only goes to prove
That Venus was not born from out the brain:

No! 'tis some Mary, daughter of the heart,
Fresh from the hand of mother Nature dress'd,
Guileless of learning, and from wealth apart;
Unconscious of the love which fills her breast.

Such could a poet's nature move to tears,
And raise his muse in rapture to the sky;—
A love unchanged throughout the flight of years:—
Songs made immortal when on earth we die.

1864.

EVER ONWARD.

Since the mighty race began,
Man has followed after man;
Travelling onward to the west,
Each fulfilling God's behest.

Leaving all the world round,
Cities, trodden underground;
Trace of all that's left behind,
Whispers borne upon the wind.

Strangers in a land unknown;
Learning, yet no wiser grown;
Still the mystery of the grave
Proveth man a crafty knave.

Yet in faith of better things,
Every age its tribute brings;
Thus the crowd flows on the same,
With a deep mysterious aim.

December 10th, 1864.

ECHOES.

Words! 'tis said when once they're spoken,
Like a stone thrown in the sea,
Wake a ripple on the ocean
Of the great eternity.

Idle thoughts though whispered softly,
Fall not, but for ever rise;
Still progressing, still expanding,
Till they thunder in the skies!

Guard them, then, for soon as uttered
Quick they vibrate on the air,
Travelling through the whole creation,
Scattering influence everywhere:

Think when wandering hereafter
In that land beyond the tomb,
Hearing those undying spirits
Shrieking wildly through the gloom!—

Words you dreamt were long forgotten,
Echoed louder than before;
Silent ripples of the ocean,
Dashing wildly on the shore.

O that every thought when spoken
Were but told in truth and love,
What a holy strain of music
Would reverberate above!

What a universal anthem,
If each silent world around,
In one glorious constellation
Would unite to swell the sound!

1864.

TO-MORROW.

To-morrow never comes; 'tis but a sound
Re-echoed from the chambers of the night;
The watchword of a weary sentinel,
Who ne'er beheld its light.

It is a phantom, that too oft deludes
The idle wanderer to Death's dark door;
From whose deep vault the voices of the dead
Do murmur evermore.

Ah then, alas! he finds when 'tis too late,
His days are gone; and crouching like a slave
To deep remorse, he stumbles o'er the brink
Which opens to his grave:

But not to sleep; to find "To-morrow's" dream
For ever gone, and nothing left to win:
Behind him but a horrid blank; before,
Another to begin.

1864.

SPRING.

How fair the colours of the landscape,
And the skies;
The deepest azure of the heavens,
And the heav'nly dyes
Of the bright rainbow; what a rich delight
Of earthly beauty on the ravished sight!

How fresh the blowing of the young buds,
And the flowers;
The gentle glowing of the sunbeams,
And the golden showers
Filling the leaves with ecstasy; how sweet
The immortal breath of Zephyr on one's cheek!

How rich the warbling of the songbirds'
Little throats;
The pleasant ringing of the woodlands,
And the varied notes
Of nature's joyful melody; to hear
Such glorious music blending on the ear!

May, 1865.

TO THE WALLFLOWER.

There is a flower, the odour of whose leaves
Recalleth back some quaint old memories.—
A little church stands close upon the shore,
The yellow sands receding far away
Into the envious distance; while the waves
Repeat the same old story in mine ear:
And on the beach there sits a motley group;
Some grey with bearded age, and some with locks
Of earliest summer dancing on the brow;
Methinks I see them still:—'tis Sabbath morn;
And from the distant town, a joyous peal
Of bells comes floating o'er the quiet green fields;
And ere the last faint murmur dies away,
The sunny locks of youth and grey beard age,
Beneath the humble portal of God's house
Bend down in adoration; and I feel
Though many years have fled, the same old spell
Come over me again; and entering in,
I lightly step where I was wont to sit,

And listening to that aged preacher's voice
In dreamy recollection, once again
I watch the open window with its trees
Nodding their branches in the summer wind:
The little birds which fluttered out and in:
The white clouds floating past; while wallflower's breath
Like holy incense filléd all the church.
1865.

TO AN OLD TREE.

Thy scattered leaves they come when spring is set;
When other trees with richer garments hide
Thy naked stems, and thou art scarcely seen
Amidst the grandeur of the vernal world:
Just like some aged beggar, who, for alms
Doth stretch abroad his arms unseen, alone;
Passed by the crowd as worthless to the sight,
Without a thought, nor yet a cheering smile
To smooth his few remaining steps in life;
Alas! for age, the simile is true:
The Youth, still conscious of his strength secure,
Laughing defiance in the face of death,
Forgets that soon, like thee, perhaps, too soon,
He'll lift his arms and raise his voice in vain.
June, 1865.

CUPID'S CONQUEST.

O Cupid has a thousand darts!
And storms with ease our bleeding hearts;
He scales its walls, nor questioned is,
If we are prisoners of his.

With silver cord unseen he binds,
Nor one unwilling captive finds;
Confused amid love's soft alarms,
We yield to his all conquering arms.

And yet, I'd rather choose to be,
O Cupid! prisoner with thee,
Than a poor wanderer, unknown
To one sweet hour with Thee alone.

July, 1865.

THE KISS.

Sweet kiss! thou silent messenger of love;
Trembling upon a bashful maiden's lip
As though afraid to tell the tale it bears,
And all the while betraying with its silence,
The tender message o'er and o'er again.
Love is an old old tale, yet always new
Whene'er it changes hands, and some young swain
Repeats it over in his sweetheart's ear;
And if the bashful maid is coy, and he
Longs for an answer from her own sweet lips,
Then doth he ply love's messenger the Kiss;
At first more gentle as the zephyr's breath,
Scattering the dew before the sun's approach;
Until at last, all Nature in a glow,
Unable to resist his kindling beams,
Pours forth her heart in one long tale of love.

December 11th, 1865.

THE KNIGHT OF ELDERSLIE.

A VISION.

The day had departed, and twilight's pale light
O'er-shadowed the scen'ry around;
As musing I wandered where Elderslie's Knight
With footsteps made holy the ground.

I saw 'gainst the yet ling'ring light in the west,
The turrets of Elderslie ha',
And that lonely mansion awoke in my breast
A feeling of deep, silent awe.

With thoughts full of rev'rence its walls I drew near,
And round it I pensively strayed,
Until from my bosom they wakened a tear,
An offering to Wallace's shade.

In sacred devotion I entered within
A low vaulted chamber so weird,
And there by a fire which burned faintly and dim,
A knight in his armour appeared.

He sat with his hand overshading his brow,
And murmured the while with a sigh
O'er the fate of poor Scotland;—"alas! even now,
For thee I must venture or die!"

This said, he arose like a giant of might,
And strode from that chamber of gloom;
His countenance seemed, as he vanished from sight,
A fatal foreboding of doom:

He staid not for love, and he staid not for home,—
His courage could brook no delay,—
But left that dear mansion in silence alone,
And passed in the darkness away.

The midnight which followed was dreary and long,
For ever as though it would reign;
I thought that fair freedom so famous in song
Would ne'er rise on Scotland again;

For then, from a tree which hung over my head,
The owl with its song had begun,
And mournfully told of a spirit that fled,
Of a deed that in darkness was done:

It told of a hero disarmed in his sleep,
A kingdom betrayed while he slept;
And yet, not a tear for himself did he weep,
Alone for his country he wept.—

"Alas! unto whom shall my children complain,
Since your chieftain in fetters is bound;
Alas! who your liberty now shall regain,
Since your help is brought falsely to ground!"

* * * * *

But ere it had finished, the grey breaking dawn
Awakened, and scared it away;
And the bright sun of Liberty ushered the morn,
Foretelling a glorious day.—

It rose o'er fair Scotland, and shines to this hour
On that favoured spot of the earth;
For freedom was Wallace's glorious dower
Which he gave to the land of his birth!

1866.

MORNING SONG.

Morning on her pinions bright
Cometh with a gradual light,
Night and all its phantoms grey
Fade into the west away.

Standing round the eastern gates,
All expectant, Nature waits
Till the sun doth issue forth,
Spreading to the south, and north.

Heralds now proclaim him near,
See! the God of youth appear;
Gazing dreamers clear the way,
Steeds like those stand no delay.

See! another day is come;—
Hark! the loud resounding drum,—
Let us follow in its train,
And the light of heaven obtain.

They who waste the hours in sleep,
Waken but at last to weep;
Ere their hand be on the plough,
Sinks the sun with angry brow.

Slumberer at the gates of morn!
Better you had ne'er been born,
Than to rise alone, and find
Nought but darkness left behind.

Let us ever be awake,
For the future lies at stake;
Our last morning may be past:
Who'd not tremble to be last?

February 10th, 1866.

TO MY HEART.

Would I could love her, as I did
That night when first I saw her face;
Behold again the winning smile,
And all its former beauties trace:

And are those former beauties gone?
And is the charm for ever fled?
In vain I ask my silent heart,
Alas! it seems for ever dead;

Else, why the coldness that hath crept
Around the once enraptured flame?
And why, the little that is left;—
Why does it burn so cold and tame?

Wilt thou not answer to my wish?
Or from thy silence must I draw,
That thou wouldst fain deceive a love
In which thou ne'er couldst find a flaw?

If I but thought that thou wert false
I'd tear thee from thy secret shrine,
And press from thee those purple drops,—
This undeserving love of mine!

May 18th, 1866.

LANGSIDE.

See! from this hill, where through the vale there runs
The river, sparkling in the setting sun;
And yon grey church which stands amid the trees,
Beneath whose silent shade full many a mound
Entombs some noble heart; see! that bright field,
Where waves a harvest full of golden grain,
Sprung from a soil made rich by human blood;
As if it strove, but strove in vain, to pay
The debt it owed to beauty's fairest Queen,
When from yon rising ground she saw, with tears,
The flower of all her chivalry dispersed,
And bade her last fond cherished hopes adieu!
And whither did she fly? ah! this recalls
My thoughts when wandering through that stately pile,*
Where Britain, like a mother, fondly stores
The mouldering relics of her noblest sons,
And of her fairest daughters; there I saw
A face, in marble even beautiful;
Made yet more fair by contrast with a foe
To whom she fled for safety, but alas!
Found less than when she stood defeated on that field.

* Westminster Abbey.

August, 1866.

NEVER CONTENT.

The distance in the landscape seems
A happier land of thought;
A land where all our brighter dreams
Should be with pleasure fraught:

It seems as though beneath its rays
The heart could lighter feel;
While o'er the summer of our days
No shadow e'er would steal.

Yet in that land we would but find
The joys we thought were there
Shine o'er the landscape left behind,
As pleasing, and as fair.

Thus, with our golden days, do we
Their purity destroy,
And rob the pleasures which we see
Of half their fullest joy.

September, 1866.

ALBERT THE GOOD.

Years now are fled since he hath passed away,—
Albert, the Good; and many men since then
Have died who are forgot; yet, still he lives,
And, as the memory of all holy men
Doth breathe the spirit of their labours gone,
So shall he live in every noble breast.
Ah! what a solemn hour was that, which told
That Britain's chief had gone;—methinks I hear
The startled exclamation, "Is he dead?"
Which fell from every lip;—an hour, which told
That Death had stolen to the royal camp,
And ta'en the leader of a mighty host;
When, as he led him captive from our midst,
The stifled whisper, and the anxious look,
Asked, as in vain; "O who shall be our guide?"

1866.

THE CALL.

Give us your hand my brother,
We who are tried of old;
We who have fought together,
Spurning the world's gold;
We who have oft been told
Efforts were useless!

Give us your hand my brother,
We who have silence kept;
We who have stood together
Hiding the tears we wept,
While the rude world swept
Carelessly onward!

Give us your hand my brother;
What though we dwell apart;
We can converse together,
Bringing each heart to heart;
Greater than man's great art,
Spurning all distance!

Give us your hand my brother,
Dwellers in every land;
Let us unite together,
Join with us heart and hand,
Till one celestial band
Circles the world!

October, 1866.

THE DISAPPOINTMENT.

Give me the book I love so well,
And I will to the mountains go;
And build me there a lonely cell
Far up amid the eternal snow:

There fasting I will ever pray,
And suffer every penance given,
In hope that yet some future day
Will bring this world nearer heaven;

For I am weary of each wile,
That seems as though they ne'er would end;
When e'en some devil would beguile
An honest heart to call him friend.

When will that love each other show,
Which, like a heavenly cord, doth bind
The heart of mortals here below;
And never thus prove so unkind?

December, 1866.

A PRESENTIMENT.

'Twas one of those mysterious moments, when
An unseen spirit stretches forth its hand
And turns aside the current of our thoughts;
While with prophetic insight we behold
The future prospects of our life spread out,
And all the idol wishes of our hopes,
Like plenteous profusion of sweet flowers
To deck our cup of pleasure, strewn round:
In such a moment I beheld a face,
The same ideal of my youthful dreams,—
A very Hebe with the pleasing cup;—
And when the vision vanished, and I turned
Upon the stern realities of life,
I met the gaze of two full laughing eyes,
Could rival even these of Hebe's self;
With all their attributes of golden hair,
The rosy cheek, and Cupid's finger mark—
A dimpled chin, at which my heart with joy
Exclaimed, here surely is my Love at last!

1866.

THE AIM.

Seek not the trifling smile of praise,
'Tis but a vain delusive joy;
Nor, like a child, sit down to gaze
Upon an empty glittering toy,
But dash it down,
And with a frown,
At once its tempting look destroy!

O take away the laurel wreath,
The gift but of a monarch's mirth;
What vantage can a crown bequeath
At the immortal hour of birth?
Though Helicon
It grew upon,
We leave it with the things of earth!

Hence all desire of worldly fame
Which mars the Poet's lofty thought;
His be a high and holier aim,
With all th' eternal future fraught;
A glorious theme
Of life unseen;
All other efforts come to nought!

January 8th, 1867.

THE DEATHLESS CITY.

Art thou a citizen of the deathless city?
A brother to the brotherhood of noble hearts?
For if thou art, then strive to do thy duty
As well as others have performed their parts.

Go! add a footstep too, towards thy salvation,
The Babel tower of which mortality began;
Another stone to aid in its completion,—
A witness of divinity in man.

Let not the miserable pottage of this earth
E'er bribe from thee the birthright to a better land,
Nor gilded ornament, of a moment's worth,
Tempt the rich talisman from out thy hand:—

A talisman! which, since mankind's nativity,
Guards him from the great dragon, Evil's fiery breath;—
A passport to the country of longevity,
Beyond the precincts of the powers of death.

January 31st, 1867.

A POET'S THOUGHTS.

A Poet's thoughts! ah, who would bind
The deep felt passions of the mind
When nature calls them forth?
And who would nip them in the bud?—
Flowers planted by the hand of God
To deck this earth.

O Thought! born from the womb of woe,
What debt of gratitude we owe
To him who gives thee birth:
One moment plunged as deep as night;
The other, soaring with delight,
And holy mirth.

His faith alone doth make him blest;
A mortal far above the rest,
He lives beyond the dead:
With purpose fixed, he thus pursues
The path for which his Maker chose
His feet to tread.

But yet, unhappiest of our kind,
He bears the burthen of his mind
Alone amid the crowd;
While we, regardless of a tear,
Still turn upon him with a sneer,
And call him proud.

O let us act the honest part,
And entertain a Poet's heart,
That happy he may be
To share his fate; for who can tell
The thoughts which in his bosom dwell,
Of love and thee?

February 7th, 1867.

THE INN.

How many travellers have passed this way?—
Travellers whose footsteps I would fain pursue;—
And whither fled? my aged hostess say;
Ah! tell me not a tale that seemeth true,
That they are dead and can return no more;
Say rather, that they travel on before,
With yet another Inn upon their view,
Where I may overtake them, and enjoy
The social cup which tastes of no alloy!

April 17th, 1867.

THE TWO MAIDENS.

Long, long ago, O happy time!
I loved a melancholy maid;
But, like the flowers she gave me then
Which withered in the silent shade,
My love hath perished; nought is left,
But fragments of a time bereft
Of all its beauty that inspired
The flame with which my soul was fired.

But now, thrice happier time; because,
A merry maiden with her smiles
Reigns queen alone o'er all my heart,
And every weary hour beguiles:
The memory of each passing day
Records the pleasure of her sway;
For sprightly mien and laughing eyes,
Than melancholy, is more wise.

May 9th, 1867.

WOMAN.

There is a deep and placid look in woman,
As though she knew the secret of creation:—
A secret, which old mother Eve bequeathed
To all her daughters; thus, the ancients did
Portray, upon the countenance of Ceres,
Eyes of such silent depth which seemed to say—
In me all nature concentrates;—a look,
Which sets aside men's wisdom, and makes fools
Of learned scholars, who, in search of fame,
Despise the aid of woman, in whose arms
Is found the sum of happiness on earth:—
Give me a woman's hand to lead me on,
And I'll defy each danger in my path;
Her eyes to cheer me, and her lips to praise,
And I will climb the mountains of this globe;
There, from their highest summit to proclaim,
The influence and wealth of all her love!

May 14th, 1867.

THE FAVOURED.

A linnet sat upon a tree,
And sang as other linnets would;
But somehow, this one thought, that he
Was favoured more than all the brood:

And so he sat from every one
Apart, but sung his song in vain,
For somehow, people passed, and none
E'er thought of listening to his strain.

At length a Poet came that way
Attracted by the simple song,
And unto him it seemed to say—
"Why have you stayed away so long?

"I've sat since morning on this bough,
And tried to wile away my grief;
For Song, the Poet must allow,
Brings to the troubled heart relief:

"But yet it seemed I'd die with thought
Before yon sun had sunk to rest,
For each succeeding hour but brought
Its burthen to my wearied breast.

"But now, a sympathetic chord
Returns the echo of my lay;
Methinks I could again afford
To live, and sing another day!

"Couldst thou but hear me once again,
I'd seek the shades of night in peace;
For then, my song were not in vain,
Nor would its echo ever cease!

* * * *

1867.

CLOUDS.

Never let your mind be daunted
  Though its clouds shut out the sky,
Pierce the shadow, and beyond it,
  Every evil power defy:

Break the evil chain that binds you
  To this scene of death below,
And, within a world of gladness,
  Reign triumphant o'er the Foe.—

It is but a transient darkness,
  Sent to prove the hearts of men;
Happy they who wait in patience
  Till the sunshine comes again.

1867.

SILENT MUSINGS.

AFTER-THOUGHTS.

'Tis when Apollo with his fiery steeds
Withdraws his golden chariot in the west,
And Nature, weary of the garish day,
Doth throw her gaudy garments all aside;
And in her mantled hood of sober light
Steals noiselessly along the silent fields,
And up the hillside's solitary path;
Until, from off the very mountain's top,
Seems lifted up; that, as one turns to meet
The dark'ning visage of mysterious night,
A thousand after-thoughts come crowding up,
Like honest workers whom we had forgot—
Workers, alas! we seldom e'er employ:
Using the services of low born knaves,
Sent by the devil to deceive ourselves
And steal the only riches which we have;—
Those golden moments of our early life.

TEARS.

I love the evening when it welcomes in
A few quiet hours, and nature rests awhile;
To sit and contemplate with holy thought
The melancholy wanderings of the mind:
Come, then, thou heavenly messenger of sadness,
And with the tips of thy celestial fingers
Melt all the frozen waters of the heart;
Touch but the secret spring that lies beneath,
And waken up from out its quiet depths
A flood of dear old memories, long forgot.
O what enraptured moments of our life!
When round the silence of the heart there steals
Thoughts that unite our spirits with the Past,
Holding a magic influence over nature,
While we retrace our footsteps with delight,
And tread its haunted chambers.

* * * *

LOVE.

'Tis sympathy which calleth forth our love,
And stirs those deeper feelings of the heart
To something more than passion: it doth give
A holier longing to each warm desire;—
A longing after something yet as sweet,
But free from all the grossness of the world.
This is the only spark of heavenly fire
Which burns immortal in the human breast:
Unchangeable, if unalloyed, it stands;
Unless it change from sorrow into joy,
From gloomy sadness to a glorious light,
From death to life; this, this alone is love!
And bids the soul aspire to higher joys,
Leaving behind the miseries of earth.

THE SPIRITUAL.

Alone in the world, wand'ring silently;
Wearing a smile when my companions meet,
But choosing rather the sequestered spot
To converse with dame Nature and one's self:
To feel that this vain world is not all,
But that there is a spiritual; to live
Apart from all its emptiness; to hear
The inspirations of the God within;
Then, all things earthly vanish, and the soul,
Rising to heav'n, feels what it is to live.

'Tis midnight; and aslant the mighty dome
Of heaven's arch, bestud with little stars,
There comes a mighty and melodious sound,
Like to the rushing wind at Pentecost,
Filling the soul as with an unknown tongue
Which seeks to praise its great Creator's power,
That man in wonder asketh, "What is meant?"

Vain one, wilt thou for ever shut thine eyes
Against the sun's bright face? and wilt thou draw
The cloak of doubt around thee when the moon
With pleading look shines o'er the heavenly scene?
Such efforts are in vain; the spirit still,
Like a true watchman, heareth, when 'tis called;
And though imprisoned in a thousand walls,
And every window darkened! still that voice,
Which answers to its Maker, makes thee tremble.

There is a holy quietness in nature
Breeds high and noble thoughts, and lifts the mind
From out the petty turmoils of our life:
There is a spirit in its very silence
Which speaks aloud, the oracle of God;
Giving strange utterance to a mystery,
Which this, our insignificance of thought,
Will never comprehend.

GOD.

Begone! nor tell me that there is no God
On whom the awful consequence must rest,—
The end and purpose of the universe;—
Else, we become responsible for part
Of things created; let me reason thus:—
If there be nought superior to man,
Then we are mortal, and have not the power
To slip the grasp of death, and for ourselves
Create a new existence: in our hands
Doth lie the choice of misery alone.
And who would toil for nothing, or endure
The constant din of their revolving thoughts,
If, by refusal, they secured the rest
Of an eternal sleep, for ever free
From all the trials and results of life—
Oblivion's draught? but, should we rather choose
To live the allotted period of our lives;
Then doth it seem to me that we do run
A debt with nature which we cannot pay;
Shrinking like cowards in the arms of death,
Until at last, it so accumulates,

That the enragéd worlds from their spheres,
Falling revengeful, will, from off their breasts,
Hurl the yet living remnant of mankind
To outer darkness as a useless thing,
A failure of Creation and of Time.

Say, who will guide the planets? will some wretch
Direct their course, when tottering with age
They scarce can hold their wonted path in heaven?
When all material things must have an end,
Say, who will seal the sky with all its stars,
And spurn this earth ball to the depths of hell;
Till torn within the vacuum left behind,
The Last of all existence pass away?
Ah! how I tremble at the fearful thought
Of countless worlds rolling on through space,
With no superior hand to guide their course;
Threatening confusion in a moment's time,
When all the wild conflicting powers of chaos,
Tearing the conscious membranes of our life
A thousand ways, would drag us with despair,
Till we beheld with horror undescribed,
The breath-expiring vision of all time.

Go! tell me not that man can disbelieve
In one Great Being, one Almighty Source;—
Or call it by whatever name thou wilt:—
'Tis but a living death within the heart
Of mortal, who, unconscious of a power
That wakes his mind to action or to thought,
Lives unconverted; it is death itself;
For in the action of each thought alone
Lies an acknowledgement of the God within;
Withdraw this will to act, this power that moved;
And yet if there remain the smallest spark
Of conscious life within that mortal's breast,
I say it is impossible to doubt,
Else, he's a liar to his honest self:
For what is consciousness of life but God;
Take this from man and he is changed at once
To lifeless matter, death; or what is worse,—
A living shadow of that dreaded state.

HUMILITY.

'Tis said, that angels weep, when man, proud man!
With vain presumption stretches forth his hand,
As though the mighty universe was his,
And cuts such antics in the face of heaven
As would make devils laugh; 'tis true indeed:
Man is a changeful mortal, and commits
Strange depredations in this life of his;
One moment finds him plunged as deep as hell,
The other, high as heaven: many a thought
Has carried him beneath its very portal.
Oh! what a mighty change from blessed light,
To find ourselves in deepest dungeon pent,
Fettered with gyves and chains of our own make;
With all the fiends and demons of remorse
Pointing their daggers at one's very throat!

* * * *

This is a life
Full of strange dreams and wild realities:
Our footsteps border on an awful gulf,
From whose perplexing depth the human mind
Reels back in madness, shrinking in itself.
It is a life in which the heart of man
Should yield obedience to its spirit guide:
We should indeed be humble; who can say,
What fate awaits us through the gloom profound.
O Sacred Power! before thine awful front
I bow submissive; may each step of mine
Be found, in this mysterious pilgrimage,
Travelling to Thee.

PROCRASTINATION.

How strange; some people put their burthen off,
And say, To-morrow will I carry it;
When lo! Death comes with solemn smile, and lays
The weary burthen on their shoulders, saying,
"I cannot take it:" then alas! they find
'Tis far too heavy, and beneath the load,
Sink with confusion into dark despair.

Say, reader, could your spirit brook the thought
To see each comrade passing one by one,
Until at last, yourself were left alone;
The world, with its various aims, all lost;
And nought remaining but the silent grave,
Wherein you fall, unheard of, and unknown?

DEATH.

If this were all,
And nothing followed but forgetfulness;
Then we might fill a coffin with our faults,
And bury't deep in earth; then could we wear
A careless smile before the face of heaven,
And mock the empty horrors of the grave:
But all our faults committed in this life,
Like poor relations, stride about the street,
And with a ghastly smile of recognition
Intrude themselves before our very face,
Or, in the darker midnight of despair,
Glare at us wildly with unholy eyes:
Too well we know them, but our injured pride
Repels the thought with approbative smile;
And, thrusting them aside, we wish in vain
That they were strangled by thy hand, O Death!

TIME.

Time is too big for thought; the greatest will
Of human wisdom cannot find thee out,
Nor say, behold thy source! but this we know,
That all the moments of our life, called time,
If left to pass unused, do take a part
Of our existence from us; yet, we stand
At God's great workshop, seemingly afraid
To knock without the gate, and be received
As labourers in the mighty field of life:
Fretting ourselves with an imagined hell;
As though the glorious future had no hope
Worthy the efforts of our own free will.
Yet, should we say, I will do this, and this,
Nor think that God could frustrate all our plans,
We talk as fools; but, let us rather ask
His mighty power to aid us in our lives;
Then will we act more wisely, and perform
More wonders in the world than we dreamt of.

Come boldly forward while your strength is great;
Be not afraid, its wages are a crown
And life eternal; enter nobly in;
Even History shall mark thee for his own;
For he is time keeper, and sits without,
And enters, with a golden pen, the names
Of all true labourers: see! on the page,
Names bright and glorious as the stars which shine!

THOUGHTS.

Man is not master of his mind, his thoughts
Do come and go like spirits in a dream;
And when he thinks he hath them in his grasp,
They vanish from his sight, and, all unseen,
Laugh every mighty effort into scorn.
And thus it is, throughout the live long day,
I've followed in pursuit, and now it seems
As if, were I to yield another step,
Those phantoms of my brain would drive me mad:

And shall this last for ever? O my God!
Still to be dragged by this untiring spirit
Through all the black infinitude of space,
Until the endless number of my thoughts
Turn back upon me in their awful strength,
To tear the shattered reason from my brain,
And leave this unseen life of mine at last
A chaos of confusion; fearful thought:
Oh! surely, God, in mercy, never meant
That such a monster of conception should
Pursue this frail humanity through life;
And with its hated presence ever near,
Remind us that the very joy we feel
Is but an empty bubble; tearing thus,
The veil of hope and pleasure from our eyes.

THE SECRET.

Creation's secret lieth not in creeds,
Nor in the empty babbling of the mind;
We stumble in our graves, nor even learn
The entrance, or the exit which we made.
Then what availeth all this wearied thought,
This vain attempt to over-reach ourselves;
When happiness is found by those, content,
Who look on nature with a wondrous eye,
Nor ever question whence their joys have come.
Methinks yon rustic singing from his heart,
Lives more to God's own liking, than the man,
Who wearies out his life in deepest thought,
Questioning those things he cannot understand;
To find himself, when at his journey's end,
Lack that contentment which his brother found.

THE PURPOSE.

God is an Alchemist! the dome of heaven
His mighty workshop and laboratory:
The worlds around, a thousand crucibles;
And we, the metal that is tried therein.
Life is the furnace, all through which we pass;
Whose subtle flame discovers every part,
Nor leaves one mote untried: it separates
The baser metal from the shining gold;
Casting aside the dross unfit for use.

Ah! who is there who feels not, at the thought
Of such a trial, like to worthless dross,
Unfit for usage? many noble hearts,
In one dark moment of despair, have cut
The trembling thread of life, and madly plunged
To end their torments in another world.
What fate awaiteth such we cannot say,
But, let us rather strive to clothe ourselves
In garments which this flame will ne'er consume;
Then we will leave but little dross behind;
And, at the consummation of our lives,
Be found unmixed, and purified like gold;
Fit for a place in that celestial crown
Which God alone doth wear!

OTHER WORLDS.

I've heard Apollo's harp, when all was quiet,
Vibrating in the silence of the night;
I've heard its music falling through the air,
Like sacred anthem from a thousand strings.
And will such music, from the heavens above,
Have pierced the deep blue vault to other worlds,
And waked the bosom to a flood of tears
Of some poetic wanderer, as he roams
In twilight by his native Helicon?
And will he, like another Pan, have plucked
A reed from out some sacred river's bank,
And, breathing forth his soul in notes of love,
Recalled the feathery songsters from their nest,
And tempted even Echo's sweetest voice,
To waken and make answer to his song?

MORNING.

See! how the morning, like a blooming maid,
Doth ope her curtains to the god of day;
Her lovely smile bespeaks the joy she feels,
To greet his presence and to hear his voice:
Upon her brow no evil omen sits,
To mar the pleasures of the sporting day;
The ills of night, with vain and false portent,
Are buried, all, in one forgetful dream.
Then rouse, my heart! and, in the garb of mirth,
Scare every sickly spirit of the night:
Go! seek society upon the hills,
Where Health, the daughter of the early morn,
Comes tripping o'er the dew; go court her smiles—
Her eyes of purest azure, and her voice,
Whose notes of gladness, like a babbling brook,
Bring pleasure to the heart; go win her love!
And from the parted smile upon her lips
Drink the rich fragrance from her very soul,—
The breath of morning, and the soul of health!

THE END.

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